

Post-Conflict Viability of a Two-State Solution: A Geospatial Analysis of Reconstruction Challenges in Gaza

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Abstract

The study examines the post-conflict viability of a two-state solution in the Gaza strip, focusing on the geospatial analysis of reconstruction challenges. This study investigates the spatial dimensions of reconstruction and their impact on social and political stability of the rubbles of Gaza. The feelings of relative deprivation of a marginalized community led the researchers to adopt the relative deprivation theory. These disparities, evidenced by the uneven access to essential social services like healthcare, education, water, housing, etc, pose a substantial threat to the long-term viability of a two-state solution. Findings from the study further reveals that about 1.7 million people are internally displaced in Gaza (75%) of the population, while 1.1million people are projected to face a catastrophic crisis of food insecurity. The study further reveals that United Nations and its sister agencies require about \$50 billion to rebuild Gaza. The study concludes that Gaza strip needs urgent humanitarian intervention for her internally displaced persons and recommends that the International Red Cross and UNSC should continue monitoring the ceasefire agreement entered into by the warring parties and see to the release of further hostages held by both parties.

Keywords: *Gaza, Two-State Solution, Geospatial.*

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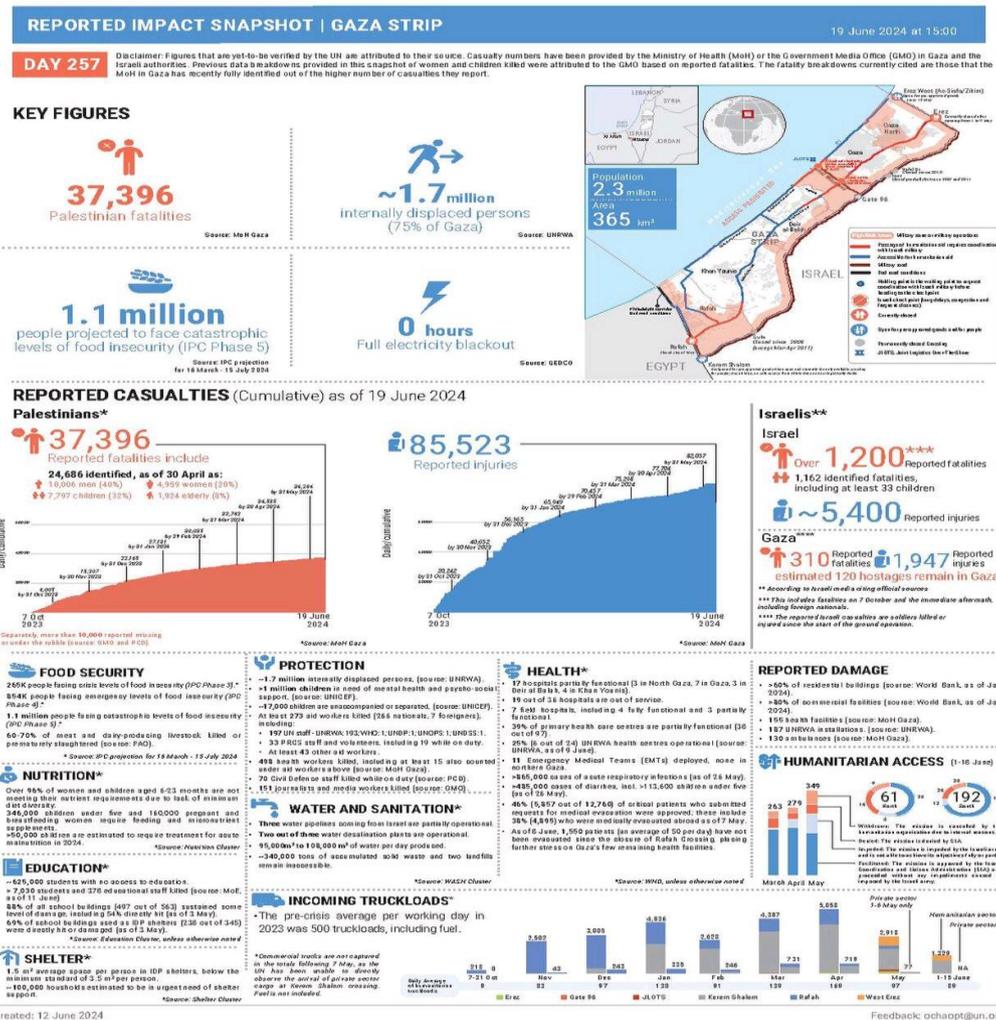
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I. Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most enduring and complex geopolitical struggles of the modern era, with its roots stretching back to the early 20th century. At the heart of this dispute lies the issue of statehood and sovereignty, with both Israelis and Palestinians claiming the right to self-determination over

the same territory. The proposed Two-State Solution for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict finds its roots in the early 20th century but was essentially an evolved form of all Middle Eastern States competing nationalisms cropping up during the British Mandate for Palestine (1920-1948). Those aspirations came full circle with the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, providing for separating the country into different independent Jewish and Arab states, while having Jerusalem under international administration (United Nations, 1947). The UN-1947 plan was accepted by the Jewish leadership but presumed unacceptable to Arab leaders, who perceived this as a trespass into Palestinian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War in 1948 marked the commencement of what proved to be a long-drawn and complex conflict, which is still felt today. Palestinians are unable to establish their own state, and their most treasured grievance is the displacement experienced by its population. These grievances were acutely worsened by territory annexed by Israel after the 1967 Six-Day War, in which the captured territories included the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The occupation of these territories not only serves intensifying interests but escalated the conflict between the two states and has also crept into the central issue in subsequent negotiations regarding peace.

In 1948, the State of Israel came into being, and with it, the Zionist dream of a homeland for the Jewish people was realized while staving off the homeless from a Palestinian utopia. Some-not all-of the over 700,000 Palestinians who were displaced due to the war dubbed what came to be known later as 'Nakba' (catastrophe) would go on to have the event shape their collective memory and identity, both past and present (Khalidi, 1997). The displacement and the inability to build a state of their own are primary grievances for all Palestinians. These grievances were further aggravated when Israel expanded its territories after the 1967 Six-Day War, which saw territories such as the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights come under its control. Not only was the occupation of these areas an intensifier for the conflict but it also translated into a main issue in the further negotiations on peace. Over the decades, various solutions have been proposed to address this conflict, the most prominent being the Two-State Solution. This framework envisions two sovereign states coexisting side by side—Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Arab population. However, the viability of this solution has been called into question due to persistent challenges, including territorial disputes, political fragmentation, and the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Two-State Solution gained significant traction following the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, which proposed the division of Mandatory Palestine into independent Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem designated as an international zone (United Nations, 1947). While this plan was accepted by Jewish leaders, it was vehemently rejected by Arab states and Palestinian leaders, triggering the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. The conflict culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel, while the proposed Arab state failed to materialize, leaving Palestinians stateless and displaced. This early divergence in outcomes set the stage for decades of hostility and mistrust. Subsequent efforts to realize the vision of two states solution, including the Camp David Accords (1978), the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), and various U.S.-brokered peace initiatives, have yielded limited progress. The Oslo Accords, for instance, introduced the concept of Palestinian self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza and laid the groundwork for a negotiated settlement. However, the agreement failed to resolve critical issues such as borders, the status of Jerusalem, and the rights of Palestinian refugees, leading to its eventual collapse (Shlaim, 2000). Today, the Two-State Solution remains a cornerstone of international diplomacy, endorsed by the United Nations and major world powers, yet it appears increasingly unattainable. A significant barrier to the Two-State Solution is the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These settlements, widely regarded as illegal under international law, have fragmented the territory envisioned for a future Palestinian state, making it difficult to establish contiguous borders (B'Tselem, 2021). Additionally, the political division between the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza has further undermined the prospects for a unified Palestinian state. This fragmentation not only weakens Palestinian leadership but also complicates negotiations with Israel, which often cites security concerns as a justification for its policies.



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Interestingly, Gaza has become a symbol of the broader challenges facing the Two-State Solution. Since Hamas assumed control of the territory in 2007, Gaza has been subjected to a crippling blockade by Israel and Egypt, effectively isolating it from rest of the world. This blockade, coupled with repeated military conflicts, have devastated Gaza's infrastructure, economy, and society. As of 2022, over 80% of Gaza's population relies on international aid, and unemployment exceeds 45%, making it one of the most impoverished regions in the world (UNRWA, 2022). The humanitarian crisis in Gaza not only exacerbates tensions but also serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for a comprehensive and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As at June, 2024, about 34,396 people had been killed in Gaza strip since the invasion by Hamas and Israel (UNRWA, 2024). Data from United Nations estimated that 69% of structures in Gaza has been destroyed or damaged, including but not limited to 245,000 homes (UN, 2025). Lessons from international conflict zones, such as Yemen and Nigeria's Niger Delta region, provide valuable insights into the challenges and potential pathways for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Yemen, foreign assistance from the United States aimed at stabilizing the country often exacerbated existing inequalities and fueled unrest, highlighting the dangers of external interventions that fail to align with local needs (Ofozoba, Okelue, & Okeke, 2023). Similarly, in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, decades of environmental degradation and economic marginalization due to oil exploitation led to widespread militancy. The Nigerian government's amnesty programme, which combined disarmament, reintegration, and economic empowerment, underscores the importance of addressing root causes of conflict to achieve sustainable peace (Ofozoba, Ezeamama, & Okeke, 2023). Applying these lessons to Gaza, it becomes clear that any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must go beyond political agreements to address the underlying socio-economic and humanitarian challenges. For Gaza, this means lifting the blockade, rebuilding infrastructure, and fostering economic opportunities to improve living conditions. At the same time, achieving political unity among Palestinians is essential to presenting a cohesive vision for

statehood without which the Two-State Solution risks becoming an unattainable myth, rather than a practical pathway to peace.

The role of global community is also critical in shaping the prospects for a Two-State Solution. In Yemen, for instance, U.S. interventions often prioritized strategic interests over equitable development, leading to increased instability (Ofozoba, Okelue, & Okeke, 2023). Similarly, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States has been criticized for its strong support of Israel, which many believe undermines its ability to act as an impartial mediator (Slater, 2020). Conversely, the United Nations has consistently advocated for a Two-State framework through resolutions and humanitarian aid, yet its efforts have been hindered by geopolitical complexities and the lack of enforcement mechanisms. The Two-State Solution represents both a vision of peace and a profound challenge. While its proponents argue that it is the only viable path to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its implementation requires addressing deeply entrenched issues, including territorial disputes, political fragmentation, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. By drawing on lessons from international case studies and fostering genuine collaboration among critical stakeholders, the international community can help turn this vision into a reality. However, as the rubble of Gaza continues to mount, the question remains whether the Two-State Solution is a feasible objective or an enduring myth?

Conceptualizing the Two-State Solution

The concept of two states began to gain traction as a formal solution during the latter half of the 20th century, particularly following the 1967 war. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in the aftermath of the conflict, called for Israel to withdraw from territories occupied during the war in exchange for peace with its Arab neighbors (United Nations, 1967). Although the resolution became the basis for future peace efforts, its vague language—particularly regarding the extent of territorial withdrawal—left it open to differing interpretations. For Palestinians, Resolution 242 was seen as a pathway to reclaiming their land, while for Israelis, it was viewed as a framework for securing their borders. The Camp David Accords of 1978 marked a significant milestone in the history of the Two-State Solution. Brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the agreements led to peace between Israel and Egypt and established a framework for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza (Quandt, 2005). However, the accords failed to address key issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees, and the final borders of a Palestinian state. This omission left the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict unresolved and further complicated subsequent negotiations. The 1990s ushered in a new era of diplomacy with the signing of the Oslo Accords. These agreements, negotiated secretly in Norway, represented the most comprehensive attempt to date to implement the Two-State Solution. The accords established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a governing body with limited autonomy over parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and they outlined a framework for resolving final status issues such as borders, security, and refugees (Shlaim, 2000). However, the accords were fraught with challenges from the outset. Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank continued unabated, undermining Palestinian trust in the process at the same time, internal divisions among Palestinians, particularly between the PA and Hamas, weakened their negotiating position (B'Tselem, 2021).

The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 dealt a severe blow to the Oslo process. Rabin's successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, adopted a more skeptical approach to the Two-State Solution, emphasizing security concerns and rejecting significant territorial concessions. Meanwhile, the Second Intifada (2000–2005), a period of intensified violence between Israelis and Palestinians, further eroded hopes for peace. The violence underscored the deep mistrust between the two sides and highlighted the structural inequalities that make achieving two states so difficult (Slater, 2020). The role of the United States has been pivotal in shaping the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the leading mediator in peace negotiations, U.S. policies have often reflected a complex balance of strategic interests and ideological commitments. The United States' approach to the Israeli-Palestinian issue mirrors its broader engagement in conflict zones worldwide, where it seeks to project influence while managing local dynamics (Anthony, 2014).

During the Oslo Accords, the U.S. facilitated dialogues between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, underscoring its influence as a global power. However, critics argue that American policies have frequently prioritized Israeli security over Palestinian aspirations for statehood, undermining its credibility as an impartial mediator. This critique aligns with observations of U.S. actions in Africa, where interventions often reflect broader strategic objectives rather than equitable solutions (Anthony, 2014). In the decades after Oslo, the feasibility of the Two-State Solution has been increasingly called into question. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements, now home to over 700,000 settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, has fragmented Palestinian territory, making the creation of a contiguous state nearly impossible (B'Tselem, 2021). These settlements, deemed illegal under international law, have been accompanied by policies such as house demolitions, land confiscation, and restrictions on Palestinian movement. For many Palestinians, these measures represent not only an encroachment on their land but also an assault on their national identity and right to self-

determination (Khalidi, 2020). Another critical challenge to the Two-State Solution is the political division between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. Since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007, the Palestinian leadership has been split into two rival factions, with the PA governing parts of the West Bank and Hamas ruling Gaza. This division has weakened the Palestinian position in negotiations and raised questions about the feasibility of establishing a unified Palestinian state (Brown, 2012). Furthermore, Israel's blockade of Gaza and its repeated military operations in the territory have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, leaving Gaza's infrastructure in ruins and its population reliant on international aid (UNRWA, 2022). State actors have played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of the Two-State Solution. The United States, as a key mediator, has often prioritized Israeli security concerns over Palestinian aspirations, leading to accusations of bias (Slater, 2020). Conversely, the United Nations has consistently affirmed the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to statehood, yet its resolutions remain unenforced due to geopolitical constraints. Lessons from Yemen, where U.S. interventions often exacerbated local inequalities, highlight the risks of external involvement that prioritizes strategic interests over equitable solutions (Ofozoba, Okelue, & Okeke, 2023). Today, the Two-State Solution stands at a crossroads. While it remains the official policy of many international actors, including the United Nations and the European Union, its practical implementation appears increasingly distant. The realities on the ground, including settlement expansion, political fragmentation, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, suggest that the vision of two states may no longer align with the lived experiences of those it seeks to serve. As the conflict persists, the question remains: Is the Two-State Solution a viable pathway to peace, or is it an enduring myth shaped by idealism rather than pragmatism?

Theoretical Perspective

The study adopted the 'relative deprivation theory' introduced by Samuel Stouffer (1949) in his book, "The American Soldier". Samuel's research during World War II highlighted how soldiers' satisfaction was often based on a relative comparison rather than a condition that is absolute. However, Robert K. Merton (1966) in his book "Relative Deprivation and Social Justice", further provides that analysis and evidence of the theory in relation to social class and feelings of injustice. The destruction of homes, infrastructure and livelihoods in Gaza creates a sense of deprivation relative to pre-conflict conditions compared to the living standards of other population in the Middle East. In Gaza, there is unequal distribution of resources and services which contributes to feelings of deprivation among the populace. These infrastructures ranges from housing, hospitals, schools, water, agricultural produce, electricity, etc.

Rubbles of Gaza: A Microcosm of the Conflict

Gaza is where the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has reached its peak. It is encumbered with a multitude of humanitarian, political, and territorial issues that make realization of the Two-State Solution difficult. This coastal land, which is highly populated, has remained subjected to thousands of encounters with violence, economic deprivation, and long periods of international isolation at one of the most volatile places in the world over the decades. Since the takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007 split from PA, the place has experienced an Israeli and Egyptian blockade.





The blockade has not only destroyed the economy of Gaza, but it has also hampered the movement of not only goods but also people, thereby effectively isolating the region from the whole world. The rubble of Gaza, both literally and figuratively, embodies the broader challenges in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is precarious. A 2022 report by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates that more than 80% of Gaza's population is dependent on international aid, and unemployment rates are exceeding 45% (UNRWA, 2022). Infrastructure in Gaza, including hospitals, schools, and water systems, has been bombed repeatedly during military conflicts, making it always in a state of reconstruction. The blockade has only aggravated these conditions, as they further limited the entry of construction materials, medical supplies, and fuel (Ofozoba, & Ofozoba, 2023). It is this that has rendered Gaza's economy incapable of sustaining its population and deepening despair and poverty. The blockade of Gaza is often justified by Israel and Egypt as a necessary security measure to prevent the smuggling of weapons and attacks by militant groups like Hamas. However, its impact extends far beyond security, effectively punishing Gaza's civilian population. International organizations have repeatedly criticized the blockade as a form of collective punishment that violates international law (B'Tselem, 2021). These conditions have created a cycle of dependence on foreign aid, undermining the ability of Gaza's residents to achieve economic self-sufficiency. The frequent military operations in Gaza have compounded its suffering. Since 2007, there have been four major conflicts between Israel and Hamas, each leaving behind widespread destruction. The 2014 Gaza War, for instance, resulted in over 2,200 Palestinian deaths, the majority of whom were civilians, and displaced hundreds of thousands of residents (Ofozoba, Nwobu, & Okechukwu, 2023). Entire neighborhoods were reduced to rubble, and vital infrastructure such as power plants, sewage systems, and schools were destroyed (Slater, 2020). Despite international pledges for reconstruction, rebuilding efforts have been slow, hindered by restrictions on materials and the recurring nature of the violence. The political division between Hamas and the PA has further exacerbated Gaza's isolation and economic decline. Since the 2007 split, Hamas has ruled Gaza independently, while the PA maintains limited governance over parts of the West Bank. This political fragmentation has weakened Palestinian leadership and complicated efforts to negotiate with Israel. While Hamas maintains a hardline stance against Israel, the PA has pursued negotiations, though often with little success. The lack of a unified Palestinian government presents a significant barrier to achieving a coherent Two-State framework (Brown, 2012).

The plight of Gaza closely parallels other conflict zones where socio-economic marginalization has fueled cycles of violence and instability. A relevant example is Nigeria's Niger Delta region, where decades of environmental degradation and economic exclusion led to widespread militancy. The Nigerian government's amnesty program, which included disarmament, reintegration, and economic support, demonstrated the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict (Ofozoba, Ezeamama, & Okeke, 2023). Similarly, resolving Gaza's humanitarian crisis requires a comprehensive approach that addresses its economic and political isolation. Gaza's situation also mirrors the consequences of foreign interventions in Yemen, where U.S. assistance aimed at stabilizing the country often reinforced existing inequalities and contributed to prolonged instability. As scholars have noted, foreign aid that prioritizes short-term security objectives over long-term development can exacerbate local grievances and perpetuate conflict (Ofozoba, Okelue, & Okeke, 2023). In Gaza, international aid must be paired with efforts to lift the blockade, rebuild infrastructure, and create economic opportunities to foster sustainable development. However, more than \$53 billion will be required to rebuild Gaza. The rubble of Gaza serves as a stark reminder of the human cost of unresolved conflict. Its destruction highlights the failures of international diplomacy and the structural inequalities that undermine the Two-State Solution (Ofozoba, & Ikedimma 2019). For many Palestinians in Gaza, the promise of statehood and self-determination feels increasingly distant, as their daily lives are consumed by poverty, displacement, and insecurity. Without a concerted effort to address the humanitarian and political challenges facing Gaza, the broader vision of two states living side by side in peace will remain an unattainable ideal.

II. Recommendations

1. Efforts to rebuild Gaza must go beyond physical reconstruction to address its deeper socio-economic and political challenges. This includes investing in education, healthcare, and job creation to reduce dependence on foreign aid.
2. Additionally, fostering political reconciliation between Hamas and the PA is essential for creating a unified Palestinian leadership capable of negotiating a lasting peace with Israel. As seen in the Niger Delta and Yemen, sustainable solutions require not only external support but also local ownership and a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict.
3. This humanitarian crisis in Gaza should be prioritized in order to bring foundation and rest for peace. Recurrent destruction of infrastructures coupled with a permanent blockade has destroyed the economy of Gaza entirely and made its people dependent on international assistance.
4. State and non-state actors, including the United Nations and donor agencies, should work together by lifting the blockade, reconstructing the major infrastructures, and investing in long-term development projects. Just like Nigeria's amnesty programme, such as providing an enabling environment for reintegration with infrastructure and economic support, this international effort should focus on building schools, hospitals, power grids, and water systems for the dignity and stability of its people (Ofozoba, Ezeamama, & Okeke, 2023).
5. United Nations must strengthen its enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with international law, particularly regarding Israeli settlement expansion and the blockade of Gaza.
6. A viable Palestinian state requires territorial contiguity in the West Bank and Gaza, which has been eroded by Israeli settlement expansion. International efforts should focus on halting settlement construction and addressing land disputes through negotiations based on pre-1967 borders, as outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (United Nations, 1967). While politically challenging, these steps are essential for creating a geographically viable Palestinian state and fostering trust between the two parties.
7. Peace-building efforts must go beyond formal negotiations to include grassroots initiatives that promote dialogue, coexistence, and mutual understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. Civil society organizations can play a crucial role in fostering reconciliation and addressing the narratives of fear and mistrust that perpetuate the conflict.

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, the rubble of Gaza is not merely a testament to the destruction wrought by war but a symbol of the systemic failures that have perpetuated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its humanitarian crisis underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive and just resolution that prioritizes human dignity and equity. Without such efforts, the Two-State Solution risks becoming an enduring myth, overshadowed by the reality of Gaza's devastation.

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